

# Chapter 5. Management Alternatives



## Introduction

Several alternative management actions for the Reserve are described in this chapter. A summary list of alternatives is provided in table 5-1. These alternatives were formulated by an analysis of the management situation, an issue-scoping process directed at affected agencies and the public, and several subsequent planning analyses. A scoping report details the issues raised during the scoping process (Jones & Stokes 2000), and chapter 2 describes the legal framework within which this plan must fit. The alternatives in this plan are formulated around the major public issues identified. Alternatives described in this chapter would feasibly achieve the management goals stated in chapter 4, but with different levels of goal attainment and environmental and social impacts. Chapter 4 also describes management actions common to all alternatives. The choices involved in selecting alternatives for implementation are described in this chapter. Chapter 6 is an assessment of the environmental consequences of each of these alternatives.

Potential management alternatives were initially formulated but later eliminated from detailed consideration (appendix J). Reasons for elimination include significant disturbance to the Reserve's resources, inappropriate use of the Reserve lands, incompatibility with adjoining landownership, inability of the land to support needed infrastructure, and user safety. Key program areas warrant the consideration of alternatives:

- Restoration of Old-Growth and Aquatic Ecosystems,
- Recreation Management,
- Special-Area Designations, and
- Management Revenue.

Ten issues have been identified for these program areas, and alternatives have been formulated for each. Alternatives for each program area and issue are separately formulated because they are generally independent of alternatives for other program areas and issues.

Some program areas do not require alternatives, although management direction for them is included in this management plan (chapter 4). These additional areas are common program areas for all alternatives.

- Species Management (existing requirements for protection of endangered species),
- Research Management,
- Fire Management, and
- Resource Monitoring and Evaluation.

Restrictions on various activities that are required for the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered species (northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, steelhead, and salmon) are not considered discretionary and have therefore not been subjected to alternatives formulation. These restrictions are described in the “Species Management” section of chapter 4.

For all management issues, the No-Action Alternative corresponds to current management as established by the *Federal Register* notice of Interim Management Guidelines (March 19, 1999), *Headwaters Forest Reserve: Public Access (South)* (Environmental Assessment #AR-99-15), and *Watershed Restoration and Sediment Reduction for FY 2000–FY 2002* (Environmental Assessment #AR-00-03). A preferred alternative for each issue is also indicated. It should be noted that flexibility will remain with the Record of Decision (ROD) to adopt a final management alternative for each program issue that is within the range of actions addressed by the particular alternatives formulated in this chapter.

## **Alternatives for Restoration of Old-Growth and Aquatic Ecosystems**

Two issues have been identified for which alternative resolutions are consistent with the overall purpose of forest ecosystem recovery and preservation: intensity of watershed restoration and intensity of forest restoration.

### **Intensity of Watershed Restoration**

#### **Issue**

What level of watershed restoration should generally be pursued?

#### **Alternative 1A: Full-Recontour Watershed Restoration (Preferred)**

Most roads and landings having significant sediment yield would be fully recontoured where appropriate and feasible to natural topography and would be revegetated.

#### **Alternative 1B: Hydrologic-Stabilization Watershed Restoration**

Roads and landings having significant sediment yield would be reconfigured only as necessary to minimize sediment yield and would be revegetated.

**Alternative 1C: No Additional Watershed Restoration (No Action)**

Beyond watershed restoration actions through Year 2002 in accordance with the environmental assessment and ROD completed August 11, 2000, no further watershed restoration actions would be conducted.

**Intensity of Forest Restoration**

**Issue**

What intensity of density management should be conducted in harvested stands to accelerate restoration of old-growth forests?

**Alternative 2A: Moderate-Intensity Forest Restoration (Preferred)**

Density management would be conducted in pole stands, sapling/shrub stands, and openings in seed-tree harvested stands. Two to three entries on acreage currently in sapling/shrub stands and openings and in revegetated watershed-restoration sites would be made as needed. A single entry would be made on acreage currently in pole stands considered appropriate for such action.

**Alternative 2B: Low-Intensity Forest Restoration**

Density management would be conducted only in sapling/shrub stands and openings in seed-tree harvested stands, and in revegetated watershed-restoration sites, limited to one entry.

**Alternative 2C: No Forest Restoration (No Action)**

No forest restoration actions would be taken.

**Alternatives for Recreation Management**

Four issues have been identified that can be addressed in alternative ways: availability of access to the southern trailheads, the network of trails that support recreation access without compromising ecological integrity of the Reserve, and the extent of use of the trail network by equestrians and bicyclists. The suite of potential trail routes is described in tables 5-2 and 5-3 and shown in figures 5-1 and 5-2.

**Availability of Southern Access**

**Issue**

Should access to the southern trailhead(s) be limited to escorted vehicles or guided hikes, or should access be available to unescorted individual vehicles at visitors' discretion (during daylight hours in annual periods that avoid disturbance to breeding northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet and damage to roads and trails)?

**Alternative 3A: Southern Access Available to Individual Vehicles**

Access to the Salmon Pass Trailhead, and to a Universal Access Trail and an Alicia Pass Loop Trail, if those trails were developed (see Issue 4 below), would be unrestricted during appropriate periods, allowing private vehicles to traverse the Felt Springs Road from Humboldt County's Newburg Road and allowing visitors to hike (or possibly bike - see Issue 5) unescorted on Reserve trails served by the southern access route. (Note: Alternative 5A below would require that this alternative be selected). Use of the Felt Springs Road would not be allowed during periods when seasonal or hourly trail closures for the southern trails are in effect.

**Alternative 3B: Southern Access Confined to BLM Tours (No Action; Preferred)**

Access to the Salmon Pass Trailhead, and to a Universal Access Trail and an Alicia Pass Loop Trail, if those trails were developed (see Issue 4 below), would be available to escorted vehicles that are a part of scheduled, guided interpretive hikes. Trail use would be limited to these guided tours.

**Alternative 3C: No Southern Access**

Public access to the Reserve would be available to the Elk River Trailhead accessible by Humboldt County's Elk River Road. No access to the southern boundary would be provided, and Humboldt County's Newburg Road and the Felt Springs Road would only be used for administrative purposes. This alternative would not be consistent with the legislation authorizing creation of the Reserve.

**Extent of Trail System**

**Issue**

What trail system on the Reserve would best balance the need to provide recreation access to the public, while preserving the unique values of old-growth forests consistent with the purpose for which the Reserve was created?

**Alternative 4A: Extensive Old-Growth Contact Experience**

Opportunities would be provided for passing through old-growth forest for a considerable distance (table 5-3, figure 5-1). All potential trail routes shown in figure 5-1 would be available to visitors, subject to seasonal and hourly restrictions, with the Historic Military Ridge Trail providing sustained contact with the old-growth forest, and the Alicia Pass Loop Trail and the Western Periphery Trail also providing considerable contact. Overnight camping at a designated primitive campsite would be allowed.

**Alternative 4B: Limited Old-Growth Contact Experience (Preferred)**

Opportunities would be provided for limited contact with old-growth groves at both the north and south portions of the Reserve, subject to seasonal and hourly restrictions (table 5-3, figure 5-1).

The Universal Access Trail and the New Little South Fork Elk River Trail would provide contact with old-growth forests.

**Alternative 4C: No Old-Growth Contact Experience; Maximum Preservation of Old-Growth Forests**

Opportunities would be provided for experiencing riparian habitats of the Reserve, while preventing access to old-growth groves (table 5-3, figure 5-1). The New Elk River Corridor Trail would provide access to the riparian corridors in the northern portion of the Reserve. Use of the Little South Fork Elk River Trail and the Salmon Creek trail would be discontinued, as well as visitor access from the Newburg Road to the southern portion of the Reserve. This alternative would not be consistent with the legislation authorizing creation of the Reserve.

**Alternative 4D: Existing Trail System (No Action)**

The Existing Elk River Corridor Trail, Existing Little South Fork Elk River Trail, and the Salmon Creek Trail would continue to be available for Reserve access (table 5-3, figure 5-1).

**Bicycle Use**

**Issue**

Is bicycle use in portions of the Reserve consistent with ecosystem preservation and general public access for recreation purposes?

**Alternative 5A: Bicycle Use on Wider Trails**

Bicycling would be accommodated on widened trails or on former roadways where additional width is available to minimize user conflicts. Trails that would be open to bicycle use include the Elk River Corridor Trail (existing or new), the new Little South Fork Elk Trail, and the existing Salmon Creek Trail. (This alternative requires that Alternative 3A above be selected.)

**Alternative 5B: Bicycle Use in Elk River Corridor**

Bicycling would be accommodated on trails with gentle slope, i.e. the Elk River Corridor Trail (existing or new).

**Alternative 5C: No Bicycle Use (No Action; Preferred)**

Bicycle use would not be accommodated in the Reserve.

## **Equestrian Use**

### **Issue**

Is equestrian use in portions of the Reserve accessible from the Elk River Trailhead consistent with ecosystem preservation and general public access for recreation purposes?

#### **Alternative 6A: Equestrian Use on Trails Accessed from Elk River Trailhead**

Horseback riding would be accommodated on the network of trails accessible from the Elk River Trailhead, except the North-South Connecting Trails (Historic and Periphery Trails), if these trails are constructed. Available routes would therefore include the Elk River Corridor Trail (existing or new) and the Little South Fork Elk River Trail (existing or new).

#### **Alternative 6B: Equestrian Use on Elk River Corridor Trails**

Horseback riding would be accommodated on trails with gentle slope that parallel the Elk River, i.e., the Elk River Corridor Trail (existing or new).

#### **Alternative 6C: No Equestrian Use (No Action; Preferred)**

Horseback riding would not be accommodated in the Reserve.

## **Alternatives for Special-Area Designations**

### **Wilderness Study Area**

#### **Issue**

Should some portions or all of the Reserve be managed as a WSA under provisions of Sections 201 and 202 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act, to preserve wilderness characteristics that would allow future inclusion in the federal Wilderness System?

#### **Alternative 7A: Entire Wilderness Inventory Area Designated WSA**

The entire portion of the Reserve qualifying as a Wilderness Inventory Area under provisions of BLM's Final Wilderness Inventory and Study Procedures Handbook, approximately 5,885 acres (80% of the Reserve), would be managed as a WSA (figure 5-3). This alternative would preclude forest restoration actions throughout the designated area, and would preclude bicycle use on the Salmon Creek Trail (Alternative 5A).

#### **Alternative 7B: Exclude Younger Harvested Stands from WSA Designation (Preferred)**

The old-growth groves, other undisturbed forests, and older harvested stands in early-mature or later successional seral stages, approximately 4,400 acres (60% of the Reserve), would be

managed as a WSA (figure 5-3). This alternative would allow any of the forest restoration and recreation access alternatives to be implemented.

**Alternative 7C: No WSA Designation (No Action)**

No portion (0%) of the Reserve would be managed as a WSA.

**National Wild and Scenic Rivers**

**Issue**

Should eligible streams on the Reserve be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers?

**Alternative 8A: All Eligible Streams Recommended for Wild and Scenic River Designation**

All streams on the Reserve that meet eligibility requirements for consideration for Wild and Scenic River designation—Salmon Creek, South Fork Elk River, and Little South Fork Elk River—would be suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This alternative would not impose any additional management requirements on these lands to protect Wild and Scenic values.

**Alternative 8B: No Stream Recommended for Wild and Scenic River Designation (No Action; Preferred)**

None of the streams on the Reserve would be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

**State of California Ecological Reserve**

**Issue**

Should the Reserve be recommended to the California Fish and Game Commission for designation as an Ecological Reserve under provisions of Title 14 Section 630 of the California Fish and Game Code?

**Alternative 9A: Ecological Reserve Designation Recommended (Preferred)**

Unless specifically allowed by the state designation action, designation would have the effect of precluding possession of firearms (including bows), camping, fires, swimming, and operation of aircraft or hovercraft in the Reserve, in addition to other management requirements that are already part of the proposed management direction of this plan.

**Alternative 9B: No Ecological Reserve Designation Recommended (No Action)**

The Reserve would not be recommended for Ecological Reserve designation.

## **Alternatives for Management Revenue**

### **User Fees (or In-Lieu Donations)**

#### **Issue**

Should access fees (or in-lieu labor donation) be charged to users of the Reserve?

#### **Alternative 10A: Universal User Fee**

All users of the Reserve would be charged a daily user fee (or would donate labor).

#### **Alternative 10B: BLM-Sponsored Tour User Fee (Preferred)**

Reserve visitors participating in guided hikes would be charged a fee.

#### **Alternative 10C: Non-Tour User Fee**

All users of the Reserve, except participants in guided hikes, would be charged a daily user fee.

#### **Alternative 10D: No Fees (No Action)**

Fees would not be assessed for entry into the Reserve.